



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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February 7, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street Southwest
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

We write regarding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Connected Care Pilot Telehealth Program and its potential to improve the state of maternal health nationwide. The United States is one of the only countries in the developed world with a rising maternal mortality rate. Each year there are approximately 700 pregnancy-related deaths—about half of which are preventable.¹ As a country we must do better. To that end, we request that funding for the FCC's Connected Care Pilot Telehealth Program be allocated towards addressing the maternal health crisis in each state.

Even as healthcare treatments and services continue to advance, disparities in maternal health outcomes are deepening. This is particularly true in rural communities and amongst expecting women of color, who continue to suffer disproportionately high rates of maternal and infant mortality.² We know that many factors impact maternal health, including access to a regular source of health care, economic stability, access to transportation, and community support. Compounding the issue, many low-income areas have limited resources and face provider shortages which further decreases access to maternal care.³ This unfortunate reality greatly increases the risk of birthing complications or death for both mother and child.

¹ *Vital Signs: Pregnancy Related Deaths*, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, Mar. 7, 2019, at 1, <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/maternal-deaths/index.html>.

² Adriana Gallardo and Nina Martin, *Another Thing Disappearing From Rural America: Maternal Care*, PRO PUBLICA, Sept. 5, 2017, <https://www.propublica.org/article/another-thing-disappearing-from-rural-america-maternal-care>.

³ Dina Fine Maron, *Maternal Health Is Disappearing in Rural America*, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, Feb. 15, 2017, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/maternal-health-care-is-disappearing-in-rural-america/>.

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Telemedicine is a common sense, practical approach that is uniquely suited to help address access barriers in rural and low-income areas—making it a critical tool as our country works towards solving our nation’s maternal health problem.⁴ For example, Connected Care technology is enabling physicians and other healthcare professionals to provide much needed treatment through the use of remote monitoring and video services. Across the country, advances in telehealth are showing promising results in patient outcomes, including greater efficiency of service and quality of care.⁵

We welcome the Commission’s decision to establish a \$100 million program to promote telehealth for low-income Americans in rural areas. We believe that focusing telehealth resources on increasing access to maternal health has the potential to significantly improve women’s health across the country. Accordingly, we strongly urge the FCC to reserve Connected Care Pilot Telehealth Program resources for Connected Care projects addressing maternal health in each state.

Thank you very much.


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Member of Congress


Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress


Kathy Castor
Member of Congress


Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress


André Carson
Member of Congress


Yvette D. Clarke
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⁴ *Improving Access to Maternal Health Care in Rural Communities*. CENTERS FOR MEDICARE & MEDICAID SERVICES, Sep. 3, 2019, <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/OMH/equity-initiatives/rural-health/09032019-Maternal-Health-Care-in-Rural-Communities.pdf>.

⁵ Maryam Alvandi, *Telemedicine and its Role in Revolutionizing Healthcare Delivery*. THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF MANAGED CARE, Mar. 10, 2019, <https://www.ajmc.com/journals/ajac/2017/2017-vol5-n1/telemedicine-and-its-role-in-revolutionizing-healthcare-delivery>.



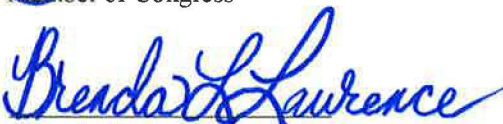
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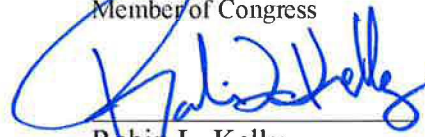
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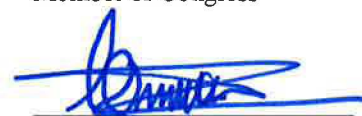
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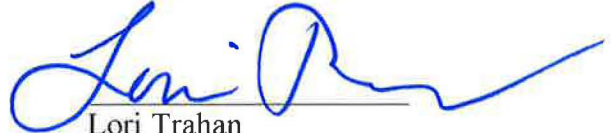
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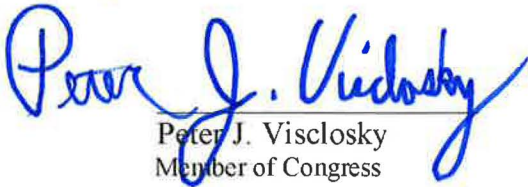
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Cc:

The Honorable Brendan Carr, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Michael O'Rielly, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission
The Honorable Geoffrey Starks, Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission